



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
 State Superintendent of Education

November 13, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents
FROM: Eric G. Mackey *EGM*
 State Superintendent of Education
RE: COVID-19 and School Operation

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 of Education

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Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
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We are closely monitoring the increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases across the state and particularly as those increases are affecting the operations of our schools in some communities. An area of great concern is the shortage of substitutes for both classroom teachers as well as school bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and other very important positions. Indeed, more schools have had to close their doors for a week or two due to the lack of enough adults to keep schools operating than for any other reason. With these concerns in mind, I am writing to encourage you to consider the following when making these important decisions:

First, if adult employees test positive or are otherwise quarantined, please make every effort to allow them to continue working remotely or to utilize any appropriate COVID-19 leave in order to avoid docking their personal/sick leave. Many adults have been quarantined for weeks even though they have not tested positive and have worked hard to follow CDC and ADPH guidelines. I would hate to see these hardworking employees lose their accumulated leave due to mandated quarantines out of their control. Moreover, it concerns me that employees who are faced with utilizing their own leave time may be tempted to be dishonest about close contacts, etc. The ALSDE worked closely with the Alabama Association of School Boards and school board attorneys to develop guidance this past summer, and I believe there are many options to consider before docking an employee's leave when that person is placed on mandatory quarantine.

Secondly, if you determine that you are no longer able to safely operate a school, please notify Dr. Marcus Vandiver by email at mvandiver@alsde.edu. Even though our dashboard keeps up with system-level information, we also want to know if individual campuses are closed. If all the schools in your system close their campuses, please notify Dr. Vandiver and notify me personally as soon as this decision is made. As much as practicable, I strongly encourage you to maintain in-person instructional options if at all possible. I know you agree that instruction is almost always best provided by a classroom teacher in person, and it is very important that we keep school campuses open if possible. Nevertheless, as I have noted above, there are times when in-person instruction is no longer an option, and we will support local school systems that are forced to move some of their schools to remote only.

Finally, we are very concerned that the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday may actually exacerbate the situation. We will continue to monitor this situation over the next few weeks. Please contact me or any of our staff with any questions or concerns.

As always, our primary concern is the personal safety and health of our students, faculty, staff, and communities, closely followed by our students' academic growth and personal development. Thank you for your continued commitment to these goals.

EGM:LAK

cc: Dr. Daniel Boyd
 Mrs. Angela Martin
 Dr. Marcus Vandiver

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